



CCM 2013 Testimony

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 92% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to testify before this joint committee.

HB 5724, "An Act Prohibiting Municipal Employees from Serving on Certain Municipal Legislative Bodies"

CCM opposes this bill.

It appears the target of the bill is Bridgeport alone.

It is not uncommon in communities to have public employees serve on local legislative bodies. State statute, which supersedes the charter prohibition, allows public employees to serve on local legislative bodies. They are allowed to vote on any issue as long as they personally do not benefit to a greater degree than the employment class they are a part of.

Bridgeport also has an Ethics Code and an Ethics Commission that enforces the code.

The argument that the bill is needed because Bridgeport does not have a Board of Finance is also not persuasive, since local boards of finance do not get into municipal labor relations except in an advisory role -- negotiations and arbitration are the sole purview of the chief executive. Legislative bodies act on the negotiated contract or arbitration award, but play no other role.

Further, in addition to Bridgeport, there are a number of other communities that are consolidated towns/cities without boards of finance, including Danbury, Hartford, Derby, and New Britain.

As this Committee knows better than others at the Legislature, serving on a city council or board of selectmen requires dedication and sacrifice. The extremely long hours, lack of privacy and little or no pay for these "part time" positions make public service a challenging endeavor for many residents. HB 5724 further complicates this situation by shrinking the pool of eligible residents to serve on a local legislative body.

The voters of Bridgeport make a determination about the fitness of persons to serve on their City Council: it happens biennially on local Election Day. If residents find councilmembers and their source of employment problematic, they'll express their displeasure at the ballot box.

We urge the Committee to take no action on HB 5724.



If you have any questions, please contact Ron Thomas (rthomas@ccm-ct.org) or Jim Finley (jfinley@ccm-ct.org) at (203) 498-3000.